

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Tuesday 9th December 2025 at Time Not Specified.

Present:

Councillor Paul Gleeson, in the Chair.

Councillors , Richard Austin BEM, Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Andy Izard, Ralph Pryke, David Scoot and Suzanne Welberry.

In attendance:

Officers:

Assistant Director - Regulatory, Democratic Services Officer, Safer Communities Service Manager, Housing, Homelessness and Wellbeing Service Manager, Housing Standards Team Leader, Communications Manager and Group Manager – Insights & Transformation.

69 Tree & Hedgerows Strategy Action Plan

The Committee received a report from the Environment and Sustainability Officer on the draft Action Plan to support delivery of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Tree and Hedgerow Strategy. A copy of the Action Plan was attached as Appendix 1 and the Strategy was attached as Appendix 2 within the report.

Members were reminded that the Strategy, adopted in 2022, set out the vision to Protect, Plant and Participate, aiming to enhance green infrastructure, improve biodiversity, and contribute to climate resilience across the sub-region.

The Officer outlined:

- Baseline data showing tree canopy cover in South and East Lincolnshire at approximately 6.5%, compared to an England average of 12.8%, and hedgerow cover at 1.5%.
- Woodland opportunity mapping indicating significant potential in East Lindsey (908 hectares), with more limited opportunities in Boston (11 hectares) and South Holland (less than 1 hectare) due to fenland landscape character.
- Proposed actions including robust biosecurity measures, sourcing native species, developing long-term management plans, and engaging communities through initiatives such as Tree Warden networks and community orchards.
- The importance of aligning the Action Plan with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and national targets for hedgerow creation (30,000 miles by 2037).
- Officers confirmed that the plan set out short, medium, and long-term targets for managing, protecting, and enhancing trees and hedgerows across the sub-region, with tree planting targets to be agreed as part of short-term actions.
- Emphasis was placed on the principle of “right tree in the right place” and the need for ongoing maintenance to ensure longevity. Boston’s fenland landscape was noted as an important characteristic to maintain. Delivery would align with

the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Lincolnshire, expected in late 2026, with a review to ensure complementarity.

Members welcomed the comprehensive nature of the Action Plan and raised the following points:

- Local Landscape and Character: Members emphasised the need to balance tree planting with the preservation of fenland character and avoid the loss of valuable grassland habitats.
- Community Engagement: Strong support was expressed for reinvigorating the Tree Warden network and expanding community orchard schemes, recognising their health and wellbeing benefits.
- Funding and Delivery: Members asked about external funding streams and carbon offsetting opportunities. Officers confirmed that grant funding options and partnerships would be explored to support delivery.
- Biosecurity and Provenance: Members stressed the importance of sourcing UK-grown stock and implementing strict biosecurity measures. Officers confirmed that procurement would prioritise native species and consider establishing community tree nurseries.
- Climate Resilience: Questions were raised about species diversity and resilience to future climate conditions. Officers advised that guidance would be sought from national bodies to ensure appropriate species selection.
- Monitoring and Reporting: Members requested measurable targets for tree and hedgerow planting and annual progress updates in future reports. Targets are due to be agreed within the next two years as listed in the action plan, and annual progress updates will be made following this.
- Engagement with Partners: Members supported engagement with Boston Woods Trust and other partners to assist delivery and secure funding opportunities.
- Site Selection: Clarification was sought on the 11 hectares identified by Friends of the Earth, with confirmation that site selection would be informed by biodiversity mapping in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Tree Management Policy: Calls were made for a tree management policy and regular inspection regime for Council-owned trees. Officers confirmed this was being developed within the partnership delivery plan.
- Long-Term Strategies: Members stressed the importance of including thinning and felling plans in long-term planting strategies.
- Planning and Biodiversity: Concerns were raised about bright security lighting on new developments harming biodiversity, urging integration of ecological considerations across planning policies.
- Maintenance Responsibilities: Questions were asked about trees owned by Lincolnshire County Council and the Environment Agency. Officers confirmed engagement would be needed but responsibility remained with those bodies.
- Support for Local Planting: Members expressed strong support for community engagement and grant schemes to encourage local tree planting and stewardship.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor David Scoot and seconded by Councillor Anton Dani.

Resolved:

That the Tree & Hedgerows Strategy Action Plan, attached as Appendices 1 and 2 within the report, be recommended to Cabinet for adoption.